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ABSTRACT

Fifty disadvantaged couples are compared with a cross-sectional norm group from a previous study in order to determine if socio-economic status is a significant variable in the difficulty experienced in adjusting to first time parenthood, and to determine if there is a statistical significant difference between selected variables such as sex, pre- and post-birth marriage ratings between the sexes, preparation for parenthood, age, pre- versus post-marital pregnancy and planned versus unplanned pregnancy in the adjustment to parenthood. Overall results indicate: that the sample shows significantly more difficulty than men in adjusting to parenthood; that preparation for parenthood does not make judgment less difficult; that older individuals find adjustment less difficult than younger persons; that there is no difference between pre- versus post-marital pregnancy and adjustment; that there is no difference between planned versus unplanned pregnancy and adjustment to parenthood. The traditional means of preparing individuals for parenthood, as measured here, are not effective with this group, indicating a need for further research in preparation for parenthood and in personal and emotional development in high school. The development of a reliable method of measuring the gratification and the difficulties involved in the transition to parenthood is needed. (Author/AM)

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ADJUSTMENT TO PARENTHOOD AMONG A SELECT GROUP OF DISADVANTAGED PARENTS

AN AFFECTIVE EVALUATION STUDY

PARENT INVOLVEMENT REPORT NO. 2

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With the assistance of
Robert W. Lind

2

April, 1975

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SOURCE OF REPORT

The research reported in this study was conducted by Sharon K. Tooke in cooperation with Dr. Robert W. Lind of the Montana State University and was presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Science degree in Family Life by Ms. Tooke. The research is not a part of the formal research program of Mountain-Plains performed pursuant to contract NE-C-00-3-0298. While members of the research services staff consulted with Ms. Tooke in the preparation of the report, Research Services had played no direct role in authoring the report. Neither has the report been subjected to the usual editorial process applied by Mountain-Plains to contracted reports. However, as the subjects are Mountain-Plains students and the topic addressed has relevance to two of the research programs underway pursuant to the contract (Early Childhood and Parent Education) it was accepted for publication in the Parent Involvement Report series. Views expressed are those of the author(s), and are not necessarily those of Mountain-Plains nor the National Institute of Education, and no endorcement by these agencies should be implied.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Parenthood means different things to different people. Not always is it regarded with unalloyed delight. To some it is a joy; to others an inconvenience; and to still others parenthood can be baffling and stressful. Whether the children are born by choice or by chance, perhaps the one thing which this diverse group called parents would agree is that parenthood means change.

> "At the verge of parenthood both men and women feel either vaguely, or more intensely than at any previous step in adulthood, that they can no longer find the way back - the beautiful way into the land of childhood (Anthony and Benedek, 1970, p. 212)."

Others contend that parenthood is complex and that one life-time is too short to learn all there is about it. Norbert Wiener, the man given credit for being the brain behind the development of the computer, writes,

> "Thus like all families, we had our problems to consider and our decisions to make. I am neither certain of the correctness of the policies I have adopted nor ashamed of any mistakes I might have made. One has only one life to live and there is not enough time in which to master the art of being a parent (Wiener, 1956, p. 224)."

Many parents, like Wiener, are beginning to confess their humility in their attempts to cope with the baffling complexities of parenthood. Also parents, quite competent in other areas of their lives, are finding parenthood a mystery and a confusion, with resulting feelings of insecurity and inadequacy as parents (LeMasters, 1970, p. 1). LeMasters found this in his study, "Parenthood as Crisis", in which 83 percent of those studied viewed first time parenthood as a crisis. Regarding this crisis event, LeMasters writes,

> "Since babies do not usually appear to married couples completely by surprise, it might be argued that this event is not really a crisis - 'well-adjusted' couples should be 'prepared for it'. The answer seems to be that children and parenthood have been so romanticized in our society that most middle-class couples are caught unprepared, even though they have planned and waited for this event for years. The fact that parenthood is 'normal' does not eliminate crisis. Death is also 'normal', but continues to be a crisis event for most families (LeMasters, 1970, p. 116)."

The parental role has several unique and salient features which might contribute to its being perceived by some as a crisis. Some of these features, according to Rossi (1968), are (1) cultural pressure to assume the role; (2) the sometimes involuntary inception of the parental role; (3) irrevocability of the parental role; (4) the lack of preparation for parenthood; (5) the abruptness of the transition to parenthood and (6) the lack of guidelines to successful parenthood. Concerning culture and parenthood, Rossi states that where cultural pressure is very great for American women to bear and rear children, psychological readiness, desire and ability may often be at odds with each other to perform adequately as a parent. The inception of a pregnancy or the parental role is not always a voluntary decision and parenthood is uaually irrevocable. "We can have ex-spouses and ex-jobs, but not ex-children (Rossi, 1968, p. 32)." The lack of preparation for parenthood is in contrast to the learning and preparation that precedes marriage. The limited learning that occurs during pregnancy is instrumental in making adjustment to parenthood potentially more stressful than marital adjustment. The abruptness of the transition can be seen in that all at once parenthood becomes a 24 hour job and there is no gradual taking on of responsibility. Concerning the lack of guidelines to successful parenthood, Rossi indicates that it would be helpful for a parent to know specifically what could be done in the way of rearing

children to become competent adults since this is the central task of parenthood.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study was two-fold. One, to determine if socio-economic status is a significant variable in the difficulty associated with first-time parenthood by means of a comparison between a disadvantaged population and a cross-section "norm group" from a previous study. Secondly, this study sought to determine if there is a significant statistical difference between selected variables in the adjustment to parenthood. The selected variables are sex, pre and post birth marriage ratings between the sexes, preparation for parenthood, age, pre vs. post marital pregnancy and planned vs. unplanned pregnancy. Although this paper has drawn heavily, in terms of the literature and findings, on previous reported parenthood as crisis studies, the difficultness of first-time parenthood, rather than viewing it from a crisis standpoint, was the focus of this paper.

Need of the Study

Researching the difficultness (if, indeed, it exists) of first-time parenthood has relevance to the disadvantaged in order that their adjustment to parenthood might be better understood. The number of disadvantaged individuals in the United States is not insignificant. One source (Havighurst, 1970) indicates that 15-20 percent of the population are truly disadvantaged in terms of income and educational achievement. The research in the field has dealt primarily with middle-class populations.

Information regarding the needs and concerns of the disadvantaged in relation to parenthood may be useful in developing programs or modifying

existing ones for their use. This study attempted to glean some information as to how the disadvantaged view parenthood; particularly in terms of the amount of difficulty in adjusting to it.

Finally, this study is important because for too long parents have received little or no preparation for parenthood. This lack of knowledge seems to have perpetuated the romantic myth of parenthood and made adjustment to it more difficult. "The suspicion is growing that modern parenthood is too serious a business to be left to the complete novices caught up as in many cases within the cycle of deprivation and noninheritance of parental skills (Hubbard and Salt, 1973, p. 4)." This study takes a look at whether preparation for parenthood makes a difference in adjusting to it.

Statistical Hypothesis

Null Hypothesis 1. There is no statistical significant difference ($p \leq 0.05$) between the Mountain-Plains (MP) subjects and Hobbs' North Carolina (NC) subjects in the difficulty experienced in adjusting to first-time parenthood.

Alternative Hypothesis 1. There will be a statistically significant difference ($p \leq 0.05$) between the MP subjects and Hobbs' NC subjects, with the MP subjects experiencing more difficulty in adjusting to parenthood.

Null Hypothesis 2. There is no statistical significant difference ($p \leq 0.05$) between the MP females and males in the difficulty experienced in adjusting to first-time parenthood.

Alternative Hypothesis 2. There will be a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between the MP females and males, with the females experiencing more difficulty than males in adjusting to first-time parenthood.

Null Hypothesis 3. There is no statistical significant difference ($p \leq 0.05$) between men and women by pre and post birth ratings of the quality of their marriage.

Alternative Hypothesis 3. There will be a difference between men and women by pre and post birth ratings of their marriages.

Null Hypothesis 4. There is no statistical significant difficulty score difference ($p \leq 0.05$) between subjects who were prepared for parenthood and those who were not prepared for parenthood.

Alternative Hypothesis 4. There will be a difference between subjects who were and who were not prepared for parenthood, with those having preparation found to experience less difficulty.

Null Hypothesis 5. There is no statistical significant difficulty score difference ($p \leq 0.05$) between younger subjects (age 21 and under) and older subjects (age 22 and over).

Alternative Hypothesis 5. There will be a difference in difficulty scores between subjects, with the older subjects experiencing less difficulty in adjusting to parenthood.

Null Hypothesis 6. There is no statistical significant difficulty score difference ($p \leq 0.05$) between subjects who become pregnant before marriage and those who became pregnant after marriage.

Alternative Hypothesis 6. Subjects who became pregnant before marriage will experience more difficulty than those who became pregnant after marriage.

Null Hypothesis 7. There is no statistical significant difficulty score difference ($p \leq 0.05$) between subjects who planned the pregnancy and those for whom it was unplanned.

Alternative Hypothesis 7. Subjects who planned the pregnancy will experience less difficulty than those who did not.

The alternative hypothesis, in each case, is the research hypothesis.

Limitations

This study and its results are limited to a select group of disadvantaged parents, namely those participating in the Mountain-Plains Program. These parents are possibly not typical of the vast majority of disadvantaged individuals in terms of their motivation and goal setting, requisites of the Program in which they are involved. This study also limits itself to parents whose eldest child is not over four years of age. Because of this, the results cannot be generalized to include all parents participating in the Program.

This study will be limited by the different methodology and terminology used in this study and the previous four. Therefore, comparisons between the studies must be made carefully.

The 23 item checklist developed by Hobbs (1965) and used in this study has some deficiencies. It is fairly reliable, but its validity is not known.

A final limitation is that parent feelings that are negative may be difficult to uncover, as mothers and fathers in our soceity are not suppose to feel regret or hostility about having had children.

Definitions of Terms

The term "disadvantaged" will refer to individuals who are so defined by Mountain-Plains Selection Criteria (Mountain-Plains, 1973).

"MP" or "Program" will refer to the Mountain-Plains Education & Economic Development Program.

"NC" refers to North Carolina

"Socio-economic status" refers to segments of the population differing in terms of education, income, and standard of living.

"Crisis" is defined as "any sharp or decisive change for which old patterns are inadequate (Hill, 1949, p. 51)."

"Difficulty" refers to the degree of perplexity.

"Student" will refer to a participant in the Mountain-Plains Program.

Chapter II

PARTIAL REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Controversy: Is Parenthood a Crisis?

In the past 17 years, considerable interest has been evoked in the subject of parenthood as crisis. It began in 1957, when E. E. LeMasters wrote what he considered a dry, scientific paper entitled, "Parenthood as Crisis." After publication of the study, be became aware of the widespread interest in parental problems as evidenced by the overwhelming reception given his paper. Since then other parenthood as crisis studies, some with conflicting findings, have appeared in the literature.

What LeMasters' study (1957) attempted to prove was that the arrival of the first child forces a reorganization of the family and that this arrival could be construed as a crisis or critical event. Crisis was defined as any sharp or decisive change for which old patterns are inadequate. In testing this hypothesis, by way of an unstructured interviewing techinque, he interviewed 46 college educated, middle-class, urban couples whose first child was age five or under at the time of the study. He found that 38 of the 46 (83 percent) reported extensive or severe crisis, versus moderate, slight or no crisis, in adjusting to the first child. The interviewer and the parents arrived at the crisis rating jointly. In the sample studied, the crisis reaction was not the result of not wanting children, it occurred whether the marriage was good or poor and it did not appear to be the result of neurosis or other psychiatric dysfunction on the part of those studied. LeMasters found that mothers with professional training and extensive professional work experience

suffered extensive or severe crisis in every case. Also, the 38 couples in the crisis group appeared to have romanticized parenthood to a great extent and they had very little, if any, effective preparation for parental roles.

Dyer (1963) patterned a study, "Parenthood as Crisis: A Re-Study," after LeMasters and arrived at similar results. A majority of his subjects (53 percent) reported an extensive or severe crisis, 47 percent reported moderate or slight crisis, and none reported no crisis. The sample consisted of 32 college educated, middle-class, urban couples whose first child was under age two. Information was gathered through the use of questionnaires administered separately to husband and wife. The results, like LeMasters' study, were based on couple crisis scores.

Hobbs conducted two different studies (1965, 1968) to determine the effect of the first child on the family. In both instances he found that, contrary to earlier studies, the arrival of the child did not constitute a crisis experience. Because of the variance in the finding of mothers and fathers on the crisis variable in earlier studies, Hobbs scored the marriage partners independently rather than combining the crisis scores of husband and wife to get crisis scores for couples. The majority of parents indicated that their marriages were more happy and satisfying since the birth of the child.

Arthur Jacoby (1969) in a critical review of these parenthood studies, gives possible explanations for the discrepancy in published crisis scores. Some of the possibilities are: lack of a standardized method of obtaining and reporting crisis scores, the age of the child at the time of the study, and social class effects.

Social Class Differences in Relation to Marriage, Contraception and Parenthood

Regarding courtship and marriage, the economically disadvantaged exhibit a fatalistic attitude; they feel as though they don't have much control over their choice of a mate. In marriage there is emotional isolation of the spouses from each other (Irelan, 1966). Correlates of disadvantaged status are early marriage, early arrival of the first child, and closely spaced children.

Social class status alone, however, does not determine or measure the extent of marital satisfaction. Karen Renne (1970) in her study, "Correlates of Dissatisfaction in Marriage," found that people currently raising children were more likely to be dissatisfied with their marriages than people who had never had children or whose children had left home, regardless of race, age, or income level.

Concerning marital satisfaction, studies have found that persons with low income or education were more apt to be dissatisfied with their marriages than were persons with adequate income and education (Komarovsky, 1964, Renne, 1970).

Concerning desired family size, the lower class Americans, who have the highest birth rate, want as few children as, or fewer than, those of higher socio-economic status. Several reasons or explanations exist for the large family size of the lower class. Their sub-culture contains few deterrants to parenthood - i.e., they live in the here and now and are oriented toward immediate gratification. This is reflected in a higher frequency of sexual relations and less use of contraceptives (Winch, 1952).

Jacoby (1969) suggests that the transition to parenthood may be more difficult for middle class parents than for working class parents. His rationale is the social class variable and the divergent results of LeMasters' and Hobbs' studies. Some of the possible reasons he gives for the transition being more difficult for middle class parents are: (1) middle class standards may be higher; (2) the working class woman places a greater intrinsic valuation on having children; (3) the principal sources of gratification for the working class woman are located within the family rather than outside; (4) parenthood is far more likely to interfere with career aspirations for middle class mothers; (5) working class respondents may be less honest in their responses; (6) middle class mothers are less experienced in the care of children; and (7) the middle class husband-wife relationship is more strongly established as affectively positive at the time of birth.

Preparation and Education for Parenthood

Are today's prospective parents being prepared adequately for parenthood? It would seem that they are not, according to parents themselves and scholars in the field of parenthood. Anna and Arnold Silverman (1971) suggest that some of the fault for the lack of preparation for parenthood lies with the educational systems, in that the subject of parenthood is passed over. The Silvermans advocate that students be given information in the pluses and minuses of parenthood, so that they can then make an objective decision as to whether or not they want to become parents.

LeMasters says much the same thing - i.e., young people should have adequate and accurate information regarding parenthood before voluntarily or involuntarily becoming parents.

One might ask why parents have not been better trained and educated for one of the most important and, potentially, one of the most skilled and rewarding of all jobs. One writer speculates that it has probably been felt that since most everyone is likely to be a parent, everyone would manage to bumble his way through parenthood in his own way, somehow. And this, it seems, is what has happened. People have bumbled through as their parents did, and as their parents did, and so on (DeRosis, 1970).

Chapter III

PROCEDURES

Introduction

The problem of this study was two-fold. One, to determine if socio-economic status is a significant variable in the difficulty associated with first-time parenthood by means of a comparison between a disadvantaged population and a cross-section "norm group" from a previous study. Secondly, this study sought to determine if there is a significant statistical difference between selected variables in the adjustment to parenthood. In accordance with this, the sample studied will be described in this chapter along with the sampling procedure. Also contained in this chapter, under appropriate subheadings, will be the method of collecting data, and the method of data analysis. A sample instrument and a copy of the verbal explanation of the study given each couple at the initial contact are contained in Appendices 2 and 3, respectively.

Population Description and Sampling Procedure

This study deals with the disadvantaged. The Mountain-Plains Education and Economic Development Program, Inc. at Glasgow Air Force Base is a residential career program for rural, multi-problem families of the six state region encompassing Idaho, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming. The criteria for selection of these families for the program require that students be un- or under employed. About two-thirds of the students constitute "poverty" families as per the Office of Economic Opportunity criteria. Entrance criteria also includes a fifth grade reading level.

This study concerns itself only with the first-born child in the family. Information as to the presence or absence of children and the ages of the children in each of the 208 families enrolled in the Program was obtained from the individual family files contained in the Program's data center. The distribution by age of the eldest child is shown in Table 1. The names of the 137 families with children and their corresponding addresses were recorded by the researcher.

Table 1

Number of Families with Children by Age of the Eldest Child

Age Group	Number of Families
0 - 1	21
1 - 2	21
2 - 3	19
3 - 4	22
4 - 5	10
5 - 6	5
6 - 7	6
7 and over	33

A sample size of 50 couples was chosen to assure representativeness. Those families in which the eldest child was still a young child - i.e., age seven and under were selected to assure the accuracy of the information given by the parents because of the time element. That is, these parents

only had to recall up to seven years ago versus perhaps recalling a longer period if those with older first-born children had been selected. Also, previous researchers dealing with the subject of parenthood and crisis interviewed those parents whose eldest child was under five years of age. For the sake of comparability with other studies, this age category was also chosen. To attain a sample of 50, the families in which the eldest child was age one and under were first contacted, next those in which the eldest was between one and two years old were contacted. This was repeated with each age group until the quota of 50 families was reached. The families had the option of participating in the study or not.

A breakdown of the four groups participating in the study is shown in Table 2. The final sample was comprised of 14 couples whose eldest child was age one year and under, 15 couples whose eldest child was between one and two year of age, 9 couples whose eldest child was between two and three years, and 12 couples whose eldest child was between three and four years of age.

Table 2

Distribution of Families Participating and Non-Participating in the Study by Age of Eldest Child

Age Group	Participating Couples	Number Refused	Number Ineligible (1)	Unable to Contact (2)	Total Number
0 - 1	14	0	2	5	21
1 - 2	15	1	1	4	21
2 - 3	9	1	3	6	19
3 - 4	12	1	4	5	22

(1) Ineligible due to one spouse being a step-parent to the eldest child.

(2) Unable to contact after repeated attempts.

The study was conducted during a two and a half week period following Easter. A number of the families were on "Incentive Leave" from the Program and, thereby, contributing to a high "no contact" rate. Incentive leave refers to paid days off earned for having attained pre-set goals in the program of study. Practical considerations did not permit an attempt to follow-up absent students at a later date.

Method of Collecting Data

The adjustment to parenthood instrument was utilized because of its objective (questionnaire) and subjective (interview) aspects. This allowed for measurable results and also gave the respondents an opportunity to express themselves. The checklist was the one developed by Hobbs (1965). Although this research avails itself of Hobbs' instrument, the extent of crisis was not measured, nor could it be, due to their being no basis in the methodological design of the instrument for measuring such. "Crisis" terminology, assigned as it was (arbitrarily) to test scores seemed inappropriate and, therefore, in this study the word "difficulty" is substituted.

Concerning the instrument, the checklist (crisis rating scale) was completed by both husband and wife independently. Some of the wording of items in the checklist had been slightly modified by this researcher for usage with disadvantaged individuals. For example, the word marriage partner was substituted for word spouse. Question one, a two-part question which also appeared in Hobbs' study (1965) was completed by both spouses independently. Questions two and three were asked by the researcher of the husband and wife individually in the other's presence. Question four, five, six, and seven were asked jointly of the husband and wife and the

responses were recorded by the researcher (see Appendix 3 for instrument).

Prior to data collection, the study received publicity, which helped pave the way. An article appeared in the Program's student newspaper and the project was explained and discussed by the author at a meeting of the MOWINDS (student) Council.

Before the adjustment to parenthood instrument was administered to the 50 couples, a pretest was performed with four couples. Members of this pretest group were also participants in the Program and were parents whose eldest child was seven years of age or older. This category of parents with older first-born children was chosen because it could safely forecast that they would not be among those included in the sample. As a result of the pretest and its findings, several changes were made in the instrument with regard to word usage and clarity of questions asked. Unexpectedly, the four couples stated that it had not been difficult for them to remember back to the time when their first-born was an infant.

In an attempt to reduce some of the difficulties in gathering information from the disadvantaged, information was obtained from the respondents in person rather than through the mail. It was thus possible to determine through facial expression or verbal responses, if the respondent seemed puzzled by the meaning of a word or phrase. The interviewer's previous experience with the disadvantaged through employment in the Public Assistance Program is felt to have enhanced the quality and validity of the interviews. Ethnic differences between the researcher and respondents presented no apparent problems. Three couples were of Spanish/Mexican descent, four couples were Indian, and the remainder were Caucasian. However, the ethnic factor was one variable that could not be controlled and which could possibly have affected the results of the study.

In the homes of the participants, the instrument, containing both fixed alternative and open-ended questions, was administered to both hu band and wife. The questionnaire-interview was completed in approximately 20 minutes. At the time the instrument was administered, the respondents were told that there were no right or wrong answers, that the interviewer was only interested in how they really felt and that they would not be identified in any way.

Method of Data Analysis

The data were coded for transfer to electronic data processing facilities at the Montana State University Computer Center. Results were analyzed by the University and by the Mountain-Plains Research Services Division*. Percentage distributions were computed and the hypotheses were tested by means of the chi square tests of independence and the analysis of variance statistic. The .05 confidence level was used throughout as the criterion for acceptance or rejection of the hypotheses.

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*The author wishes to formally acknowledge the analysis suggestions and calculations of Robert M. Pollack, Mountain-Plains Tests and Measurements Specialist.

Chapter IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The problem of this study was two-fold. One, to determine if socio-economic status is a significant variable in the difficulty experienced in adjusting to first-time parenthood by means of a comparison between a disadvantaged population and a cross-section "norm group" from a previous study. Secondly, this study sought to determine if there is a significant statistical difference between selected variables in the adjustment to parenthood. Seven hypotheses have been set forth. The .05 confidence level was used throughout as the criterion for rejection of null hypotheses.

Findings and Interpretations

Hypothesis 1. There will be a statistically significant difference between the Mountain-Plains (MP) subjects and Hobbs' North Carolina (NC) subjects, with the MP subjects experiencing more difficulty in adjusting to parenthood.

Mountain-Plains males and females both showed significantly more difficulty with first-time parenthood than did the NC sample (See Table 3). Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. Eighteen percent (18%) of the MP males were in the high difficulty group while 11.3 percent of the NC males were included in this grouping. Forty percent (40%) of the MP females were in the high difficulty group versus 26.4 percent of the NC females. Questionnaire data, based on Hobbs' five crisis categories, indicated that the vast majority of the MP respondents experienced a "slight crisis" in adjusting to first time parenthood. However, this

was significantly more difficulty than found by Hobbs in his NC study. "Crisis" terminolgy, assigned as it was (arbitrarily) to test scores seems inappropriate, and, therefore, in this study the word "difficulty" is substituted. Results thus are grouped into low and high difficulty groupings based on responses to the 23 item checklist or difficulty rating scale.

It was expected that the MP sample would experience more difficulty in view of the differences between the two different populations. Hobbs' sample of 53 couples was heterogeneous and drew from all social classes. Subjects in his sample, all Caucasian and urban dwellers, ranged from being illiterate to possessing advanced graduate degrees. The median family income was $5,900 and the age of the babies ranged from three to eighteen weeks. The MP sample of 50 couples, on the other hand, comprised a homogeneous group. Concerning the ethnic factor, three couples were of Spanish/Mexican descent and four couples were Indian. The age of the children ranged from approximately four months to four years.

The characteristics of the MP population point to a number of possible explanations as to why they experienced more difficulty. They exist on a nominal income and the arrival of a child means the need for additional food, clothing, and increased medical expenses. These MP individuals, who typically have a poor self-concept (Conrad, 1974), may doubt their worth as a parent and their ability to perform their new role. With the arrival of a child also comes additional household work. These individuals are not financially able to hire help and they lack many of the luxuries and conveniences (e.g., washer, dryer, dishwasher) of the upper and middle classes that help make caring for a child an easier task.

Table 3

A Comparison of Mountain-Plains (MP) Respondents and Hobbs' North Carolina (NC) Respondents by Sex and Difficulty Experienced in Adjusting to First-Time Parenthood

MALES

	A + B (low)		C + D + E (high)		
	MP	NC	MP	NC	
N	41	47	9	6	x^2
%	82.0	88.7	18.0	11.3	9.43*

FEMALES

	A + B (low)		C + D + E (high)		
	MP	NC	MP	NC	
N	30	39	20	24	x^2
%	60.0	73.6	40.0	26.4	49*

* Significant $p \leq .001$

Note: The five categories (A, B, C, D, E) represent Hobbs' five crisis categories (A=none, B=slight, C=moderate, D=extensive, E=severe). Hobbs' individual categories were not utilized to reduce four indistinct boundaries to one. Rather, Hobbs' categorical results were converted to Arabic numeral groupings and cell combined for the sake of comparison. For details of category assignment see Hobbs (1965).

Hypothesis 2. There will be a statistical significant difference between the MP females and males, with the females experiencing more difficulty than the males in adjusting to first-time parenthood.

The data revealed that MP women have significantly more difficulty than men in adjusting to first-time parenthood (Table 4). The null hypothesis was rejected. The mean score for men, on the 23 item checklist, was 30.58 and the mean score for women, 33.94. Eighteen percent (18%) of the MP males versus 40 percent of the MP females experienced high difficulty

in adjusting to first-time parenthood. The finding that women experienced more difficulty than men in adjusting to first-time parenthood was expected for several reasons. The arrival of a child may cause a change in a woman's life style, such as ceasing employment, less contact with friends and others in the community, while a man's life goes on much as before. Also, it is the woman who spends the majority of time with the child, caring for him and his needs. His dependence on her is absolute, while her need for him is relative (Rossi, 1968). A statistically significant difference between husbands' and wives' "crisis scores" was also found by Hobbs (1965).

Based on men versus women analysis of individual items, the difficulties which were experienced significantly different showed women having relatively more difficulty (refer to appendix 4). The women experienced more difficulty than their husbands in the following: (1) the spouse showing too little attention to baby; (2) worry about personal appearance in general, (3) housekeeping not as neat as it should be; (4) decreased sexual interest of self; (5) feeling more "distant" from spouse; (6) doubting worth as a parent; (7) worry about loss of figure; and (8) physical tiredness and fatigue.

Table 4

Mean Adjustment to Parenthood Difficulty Score of Mountain-Plains Males versus Females

	Males		Females	
M	30.58		33.94	
SD	5.36		5.29	
N	50		50	
	SS	DF	MS	F
Between Groups	282.24	1	282.24	9.76
Within Groups	2833.50	98	28.91	
	3115.74	99		

* Significant p = .01

Hypothesis 3. There is no significant difference between men and women by pre and post birth ratings of their marriages.

The chi-square test revealed no significant difference between men and women by ratings of their marriages (Table 5). Thus, the null hypothesis was retained. An essentially equal number of men and women responded the same as far as satisfaction with their marriage prior to the birth of their first child. Ninety-four percent (94%) of the men and 88 percent of the women described their marriage as being happy and satisfying prior to the advent of parenthood. Satisfaction with the marriage following the birth of the child was, again, essentially equal for the men and the women. Forty-six percent (46%) of the men and 48 percent of the women described their marriage as being more happy and satisfying than before. The arrival of the child did not adversely affect the marriage relationship; in one-half the cases the child enhanced or improved the marriage. Only six percent indicated that their marriage was less happy and satisfying following the birth of the child than it had been before.

In comparison with Hobbs' reported pre- and post-birth marriage ratings (1965), the marriages of the MP subjects did not reach the same level of satisfaction following the birth of the child. Ninety-one percent (91%) of the men and 70 percent of the women in Hobbs' study reported their marriage as being more happy and satisfying since the birth of the child. This is compared with 46 percent and 48 percent respectively for MP. Studies by Komarovsky (1964) and Renne (1970) found that Blacks and others with low income or education were more apt to be dissatisfied with their marriage than were Caucasians or people with adequate income and education. This may help explain why the MP population, with their inadequate income

and education, did not rate their marriages as highly as did Hobbs' cross-section of the population. Hobbs' finding would seem to substantiate the myth that a child improves a marriage. The result for the MP population would not support the myth nor would it refute it. This differing MP and NC finding correlates with the earlier finding that for the MP population the adjustment to parenthood is more difficult and is contrary to LeMasters contention that in the lower socio-economic strata that becoming parents is easier and/or more natural.

Table 5

Percentage and Frequency Distribution of Mountain-Plains Men and Women by Ratings of Their Marriages

Satisfaction with Marriage Before Child							
Sex	Response						x^2
	(1)		(2)		(3)		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Men	47	94.0	3	6.0	0	0.0	1.60
Women	44	88.0	5	10.0	1	2.0	

Satisfaction with Marriage After Child							
Sex	Response						x^2
	(1)		(2)		(3)		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Men	23	46.0	27	54.0	0	0.0	3.34
Women	24	48.0	23	46.0	3	6.0	

Note: For explanation of response categories (1, 2, 3), see question one on questionnaire in Appendix 3.

Hypothesis 4. There will be a statistically significant difference between subjects who were and who were not prepared for parenthood, with those having preparation receiving lower difficulty scores.

Analysis of Variance test revealed no significant difference between difficulty experienced as a reult of the first child's birth and the number

of positive responses to parent preparation items (See Table 6). The null hypothesis was retained. The finding that preparation for parenthood does not make the adjustment to the parental state less difficult was not expected. A possible explanation is that the questionnare item was not specific as to dimensions of parenthood preparedness. Also, this population appeared to be so poorly prepared, as indicated by the minimum number of items checked as being helpful, that here being among the best prepared is still totally unprepared. Or, perhaps, the difficulties encountered in the adjustment to parenthood lie outside the realm of parenthood preparation helpfulness. Dyer (1963) found a significant relationship between "crisis" and preparation for marriage, with those taking preparation for marriage courses in high school or college having experienced less crisis.

Questionnaire data revealed that a majority of the respondents found babysitting and/or caring for younger siblings to be helpful in preparing them for parenthood. This is not surprising, as many of the subjects in this study came from large families and were no strangers to having responsibility for the younger children. This is consistent with Conrad's (1974, 1975) analysis of a different sample of the MP population. This is in contrast to the middle class child's experience of growing up in a small family. Few of the MP subjects found a physician or a pre-natal class to be helpful, although interest was expressed in both of these as possible untapped resources.

Table 6

Mean Adjustment to Parenthood Difficulty Score as Related to Preparation for Parenthood

Number of Parent Preparatory Items Checked				
	0	1	2	3 and above
M	30.23	32.18	32.20	33.54
SD	4.36	6.62	4.36	5.10
N	13	38	25	24

	SS	DF	MS	F
Between Groups	93.22	3	31.07	.99
Within Groups	3010.80	96	31.36	
	3104.02	99		

Hypothesis 5. There will be a statistically significant difference in difficulty scores between younger subjects (age 21 and under) and older subjects (age 22 and over) with the older subjects experiencing less difficulty in adjusting to parenthood.

Younger individuals experienced significantly more difficulty than did older subjects in adjusting to first-time parenthood as measured by the Analysis of Variance test (See Table 7). Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. The mean difficulty score for subjects under 18 years of age was 33.15, the mean difficulty score for subjects 19 to 21 was 33.59 and the mean difficulty score for subjects 22 and over was 30.2. This result was expected in that perhaps the greater maturity of the older subjects and and their readiness and willingness to take on adult responsibility may have alleviated some of the difficulty in adjusting to parenthood. With their greater chronological age, they may have had more opportunity to prepare for a vocation or to have adequate employment and, hence, the financial burden of parenthood would be less. A number of the respondents were mothers and fathers by age 18; this in many cases precluded the completion of high school,

much less any vocational training with the promise of an adequate paying job. Havighurst (1962), in his study of the lower class, found a tendency in both sexes for higher marital ratings to be associated with later ages at marrying. Although the lower class and disadvantaged are by no means one and the same, one can speculate that perhaps this would also be the cause with the disadvantaged. Perhaps along with the greater marital satisfaction of those who married later would also come less difficulty with adjustment to parenthood.

Table 7

Mean Adjustment to Parenthood Difficulty Score as Related to Age

	18 and under	19-21	22 and over
M	33.15	33.59	30.2
SD	5.79	6.07	4.12
N	33	32	35

	SS	DF	MS	F
Between Groups	231.27	2	115.63	3.90*
Within Groups	2878.00	97	29.67	
	3109.27	99		

* Significant p = .025

Hypothesis 6. There is no significant difficulty score difference between subjects who became pregnant before marriage and those who became pregnant after marriage.

Analysis of Variance revealed no significant difference between subjects who became pregnant before marriage and those who became pregnant after marriage in the difficulty experienced in adjusting to first-time parenthood (Table 8). The null hypothesis was retained. It is conceivable that the difficulties involved in the adjustment to parenthood lie outside the realm of the variables related to pre- and post-marital pregnancy. It is possible

that the individual's perception of the forthcoming birth has more influence as far as the difficulty experienced than whether conception occurred inside or outside of marriage. That is, the subjective aspect or whether the child is wanted may be more influential than the objective aspect in determining degree of difficulty. Hobbs (1965) found no statistically significant difference between post-marital conception and degree of "crisis".

Table 8

Mean Adjustment to Parenthood Difficulty Score as Related to Pre versus Post Marital Pregnancy

	Pregnancy before Marriage		Pregnancy after Marriage	
M	32.08		32.46	
SD	5.47		5.70	
N	52		48	
	SS	DF	MS	F
Between Groups	3.6	1	3.60	.11
Within Groups	3112.0	98	31.76	
	3115.6	99		

Hypothesis 7. There is no significant difficulty score difference between subjects who planned the pregnancy and those for whom it was unplanned.

Analysis of Variance showed no significant difference between subjects who planned the pregnancy and those who did not in the difficulty experienced in adjusting to first-time parenthood (Table 9). Thus, the null hypothesis was retained. Again, it is plausible that the difficulties involved in the adjustment to first-time parenthood lie outside the realm of planned versus unplanned parenthood. It is possible that the individual's perception of the forthcoming birth has more influence as far as determining

the difficulty experienced than whether the pregnancy was planned or unplanned. Again, the subjective aspect may be more influential than the objective aspect in determining degree of difficulty. Dyer (1963) found a significant relationship between "crisis" and planned parenthood, with crisis being less among those who had planned the pregnancy. Hobbs (1965) found no statistically significant difference between planning pregnancy and degree of crisis.

Table 9

Mean Adjustment to Parenthood Difficulty Score as Related to Planned versus Unplanned Pregnancy

	Planned Pregnancy		Unplanned Pregnancy	
M	33.13		31.85	
SD	6.40		4.84	
N	32		68	
	SS	DF	MS	F
Between Groups	35.65	1	35.65	1.20
Within Groups	2902.00	98	29.61	
	2937.65	99		

Comparison with other Studies

The effect or impact of the first-born child on the parents as individuals and on the marriage relationship has been researched in this study, as it has in four additional studies (LeMasters, 1957; Dyer, 1963; Hobbs, 1965, 1968). These five studies differ from and contradict each other in some way, in terms of the results, the methodology, and the demographic variables used. This researcher's primary criticism of these four studies is their unfortunate use of "crisis" terminology. The criteria for determining or measuring "crisis" in these studies has been

relative and arbitrary without adequate empirical basis. As Jacoby (1969) pointed out, a different scoring procedure could have resulted in some respondents being placed in different "crisis" categories. This study employed the term "difficulty" which this researcher estimated to be a more accurate description of the change-over encountered in the adjustment to parenthood. The respondents in this study evidenced some difficulty in adjusting to first-time parenthood, but to categorize or pigeon-hole them as being "crisis" victims is rather grandiose and a misnomer. Other research (Koos, 1950; Geisman and LaSorte, 1964) has shown disadvantaged populations, in general, to experience a great deal of life difficulty, by definition. The MP sample was no exception; they experienced more difficulty in adjusting to parenthood than did Hobbs' NC cross-section sample of a population.

Factors to be considered when interpreting and comparing the studies and their results is: (1) differences in socio-economic status; (2) the age of the first-born child in each of the studies, and (3) the reporting of "crisis" or "difficulty" scores as couple versus individual scores. LeMasters' and Dyers' samples, which reported a "severe crisis" rating, were middle class, the samples in Hobbs' two studies drew from all social classes and reported a "slight crisis" and the MP sample, which was disadvantaged, reported "low difficulty," although greater than Hobbs' NC sample in adjusting to parenthood. One can speculate that differences in socio-economic status may account for some of the difference in the difficulty experienced in adjusting to parenthood. But any pronouncement of socio-economic status as a casual factor would be unwise in view of the divergencies in the studies. The ages of the first-born children is also

a factor that may account for some of the differences in the difficulty experienced. The first-born child in LeMasters' sample was age five and under, in Dyers' study age two and under, in Hobbs' studies under one year of age, and in this study age four and under. Caution must be exercised here again in interpreting the age differences of the children as a determinant of the amount of difficulty experienced.

The four previous studies cited reported couple "crisis" scores rather than the individual scores for husband and wife. Hobbs (1965) even though he found a significant difference between men and women "crisis" scores, reported a combined couple "crisis" score. This reporting of couple scores seems rather incongruous because as Jacoby (1969) has noted it is reasonable to expect that the impact of parenthood will be different for the father than for the mother. This study, which reported individual husband and wife difficulty scores, found that women experienced significantly more difficulty than men in adjusting to first-time parenthood. For these reasons it is rather inappropriate to draw a close comparison between the five studies due to their different means of reporting scores.

Chapter V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Study

Many young Americans are unprepared for the extensive changes in their ways of life that parenthood engenders. This study attempted to gain some information as to how difficult a select group of disadvantaged couples found this transition to parenthood to be. Were the adjustments and accommodations required by this new status eagerly welcomed or did they represent major difficulties?

Fifty disadvantaged couples participating in the Mountain-Plains Education and Economic Development Program at Glasgow Air Force Base, Montana were the subjects of a parenthood study. The objectives of the study were: (1) to determine if socio-economic status is a significant variable in the difficulty experienced in adjusting to first-time parenthood by means of a comparison between a disadvantaged population and a cross-section "norm group" from a previous study and (2) to determine if there is a statistical significant difference between selected variables in the adjustment to parenthood. A sample size of 50 couples was chosen to insure representativeness and the couples were selected on the basis of the age of their eldest child (from birth to four years). Information as to the presence or absence of children in each of the 208 MP families and the ages of the children was obtained from the Program's Data Center. Data collection took place in April, 1974 over a three week period. Identical instruments were administered by the investigator to both husband and wife in their home. The instrument contained both fixed-alternative and open-ended questions. The study, which received publicity prior to

its inception, met with a high rate of response with only three couples declining to participate. Data were analyzed by the Montana State University Computer Center and by the Mountain-Plains Research Services Department. The seven hypotheses were tested at the .05 confidence level using the chi-square measure of independence for nominal data and analysis of variance for interval data. Overall results indicated that: (1) MP sample showed significantly more difficulty with first-time parenthood than did Hobbs' NC sample; (2) women have significantly more difficulty than men in adjusting to parenthood; (3) men and women did not differ by pre- and post-birth ratings of their marriages; (4) preparation for parenthood did not make the adjustment to parenthood less difficult; (5) older individuals found the adjustment to parenthood less difficult than did younger persons; (6) there was no difference between pre- versus post-marital pregnancy and adjustment to parenthood and (7) there was no difference between planned versus unplanned pregnancy and adjustment to parenthood.

The result that individuals who had some preparation for parenthood did not experience less difficulty in adjusting to parenthood than those who has no preparation for parenthood was quite unexpected. Based on this finding, however, it should not be concluded that preparation for parenthood is of no value or of negligible value. It is possible that the parent preparation items on the questionnaire, which the respondent was asked to check as being helpful or not, were a poor index for determining preparedness for parenthood. Another possible explanation is that the traditional formal ways of preparing individuals for parenthood (e.g., course in school, pre-natal classes, or other professional methods)

were not effective with this population. Also the informal ways of preparing one (e.g. babysitting, caring for younger siblings, reading, adult models) may also have been ineffective.

Interview data, which allowed for the expression of positive or neutral attitudes toward parenthood, were collected by means of two open-ended questions (see Appendix 3). In offering advice to married couples considering parenthood, the three most frequently given responses, in descending order, by the men were: (1) be financially able to afford children; (2) delay having children until several years after marriage so as to allow time to get to know and adjust to spouse; and (3) some type of preparation or education for parenthood is needed in order for one to make an objective decision as to whether or not to have children. The responses most frequently given by the women were: (1) be certain before you become a parent that you really want a child; (2) delay having children until several years after marriage so as to allow time to get to know and adjust to spouse; and (3) be financially able to afford a child.

The responses to the question asking for comments on parenthood were primarily positive. Some of the comments voiced by both sides were parenthood is "fun, fulfilling, fantastic, enjoyable, worthwhile, etc."

In response to the open-ended questions, a number of the students made statements of fact that were actually based on mythology. Some of the myths and misconceptions regarding parenthood and children, expressed by both sexes, were that all married couples should have children, that children bring a couple closer together and strengthen a marriage, that one's purpose in life is to be a parent, that those couples who are childless

lead incomplete lives, and that the reason for and purpose of marriage is parenthood.

The responses to the interview questions seemed to correlate with the statistical findings - i.e., these MP individuals experienced primarily low difficulty in adjusting to first-time parenthood. Several individuals stated that being a parent is "very tiring" and "a difficult adjustment" and some individuals did not reply to one or both of the questions. But of those who responded, the majority indicated that for them parenthood holds more pluses than minuses. The concern over finances and that one be financially able to afford children correlates with both sexes being bothered to a great extent following the birth of their first child by increased money problems. A consideration or question that might be raised in evaluating the responses to the unstructured questions, as well as with the questionnaire material, is the honesty of the responses. The possibility that the respondents may have responded with what they thought the interviewer wanted to hear cannot be discounted. If the spontaneity of expression is any indicator of one's true feelings, the responses to the open-ended questions would be valid.

Conclusions

Some very real differences, contradictions and inadequacies exist in the parenthood studies. Because of different terminology and methodology, an accurate comparison of the five studies is difficult.

Based on the finding that older individuals experienced less difficulty in adjusting to parenthood, an implication is that the services of a planned parenthood agency may be useful. Also some type of effective

preparation for parenthood is indicated. Further research is needed here in that the traditional means of preparing individuals for parenthood, as measured by this study, were not effective with this group. Also, more attention to personal development in the teens is needed, as high school may be their last stopping-off place before parenthood. This group typically leave school at an early age, marry early, and have children soon after marriage. The data revealed that those older individuals, who possibly have greater emotional maturity along with their increased chronological age, have a less difficult time in adjusting to parenthood. If more attention could be focused on personal and emotional development in high school, rather than just academic development, perhaps these individuals would be better prepared to cope with the vicissitudes of parenthood.

For this disadvantaged MP sample the arrival of a child is akin to adding fuel to a fire. The adversities and problems of this group are many (e.g. inadequate income, inadequate housing, unemployment, discrimination, poor self concept). The child does not constitute the problem but rather causes one more problem to this already problem-laden population. Questionnaire and interview data did not indicate that this group resented the child or abhorred parenthood, but rather that it presented difficulties for them and more so than for a general cross-section of a population.

Recommendations and Suggestions for Further Research

It is recommended that further research be conducted dealing with the disadvantaged and their adjustment to parenthood. The effect of the child on this sizable segment of the population has unfortunately received

little attention. A recommendation of paramount importance and one voiced also by Jacoby (1969) is the need for development of a reliable method of measuring the gratifications and difficulties involved in the transition to parenthood.

If this researcher were to conduct this study a second time, several changes would be made. A personality description by the parents of their first-born child would be additional information gathered. This information could possibly aid in understanding if the adjustment is dependent in some way on the personality characteristics of the child. For example, do the parents of an active, excitable child find the adjustment to parenthood more difficult than do the parents of a passive, easy-going child? Also, the age of the child may be an important variable to be known in understanding if the difficulty associated with parenthood is related to the child's age at the time of the study.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

COMPLETE REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

This review of literature is presented under the following subheadings: Mythology and Romance Surrounding Parenthood, Controversy: Is Parenthood a Crisis?, Social Class Differences in Relation to Marriage, Contraception and Parenthood, and Preparation and Education for Parenthood.

Mythology and Romance Surrounding Parenthood

Max Lerner (1957) writes of the romanticization of parenthood in his book, America as a Civilization. When the romantic ideals of life and courtship are not realized in marriage, the couple transfer their romanticism to the child or parenthood role.

According to LeMasters (1970), a great deal of romantic folklore surrounds parenthood, although it is not always recognized as such. Folklore is defined as widely held beliefs which are unsupported by facts. Some of the folk beliefs cited by LeMasters are: (1) rearing children is fun; (2) children will turn out well if they have good parents; (3) today's parents are not as good as those of yesterday; (4) child rearing today is easier because of modern medicine, modern appliances, and child psychology; (5) there are no bad children - only bad parents; (6) two parents are always better than one; (7) all married couples should have children; (8) childless coupled are frustrated and unhappy; (9) children improve a marriage. It seems that these myths exist because of their value in sustaining parents in the oftentimes difficult and discouraging

job of parenthood. The romantic folklore surrounding parenthood also evolved to make sure that the role was not avoided by most adults. Sanctions are provided, but increasingly less today because of the problem of overpopulation, to encourage men and women to have children and rear them. Some examples are that parents receive preferential tax treatment, they have priorities in applications for public housing and they receive higher pay in the armed forces (LeMasters, 1970).

The Silvermans point out that individuals with idealized notions of motherhood and fatherhood often find themselves in a state of disillusionment that causes an overall decline in marital satisfaction. Also, those couples who have few illusions about childbearing are better prepared to accept the satisfactions and dissatsifactions of parenthood. In their book, The Case Against Having Children, the authors state that husbands and wives who decide to raise a family with no preconceived belief that children will improve their marriage will probably be the best emotionally equipped parents of all (Silverman and Silverman, 1971).

Controversy: Is Parenthood a Crisis?

In the past 17 years, considerable interest has been evoked in the subject of parenthood as crisis. It began in 1957, when E. E. LeMasters wrote what he considered a dry, scientific paper entitled, "Parenthood as Crisis." After publication of the study, he became aware of the widespread interest in parental problems as evidenced by the overwhelming reception given his paper. Since then other parenthood as crisis studies, some with conflicting findings, have appeared in the literature.

What LeMasters' study (1957) attempted to prove was that the arrival of the first child forces a reorganization of the family and that this

arrival could be construed as a crisis or critical event. Crisis was defined as any sharp or decisive change for which old patterns are inadequate. In testing this hypothesis, by way of an unstructured interviewing technique, he interviewed 46 college educated, middle-class, urban couples whose first child was age five or under at the time of the study. He found that 38 of the 46 (83 percent) reported extensive or severe crisis, versus moderate, slight or no crisis, in adjusting to the first child. The interviewer and the parents arrived at the crisis rating jointly. In the sample studied, the crisis reaction was not the result of not wanting children, it occurred whether the marriage was good or poor and it did not appear to be the result of neurosis or other psychiatric dysfunction on the part of those studied. LeMasters found that mothers with professional training and extensive professional work experience suffered extensive or severe crisis in every case. Also, the 38 couples in the crisis croup appeared to have romanticized parenthood to a great extent and they had very little, if any, effective preparation for parental roles. Some of the feelings or experiences reported by parents in adjusting to the first child were fatigue and tiredness, interference with social life, economic pressure, guilt at not being better parents, additional household duties, never-ending job of caring for an infant, worry about a second pregnancy in the near future and general disenchantment with the parental role.

A further finding was that parenthood and not marriage marks the final transition to maturity and adult responsibility in our culture (LeMasters, 1957). Rossi (1968) contends that this change in transition points is due to improved and more widely used contraceptives. At an

earlier time when pregnancy was likely to follow shortly after marriage, the major transition point in a woman's life was marriage itself. Now this transition point has become the first pregnancy rather than marriage.

Dyer (1963) patterned a study, "Parenthood as Crisis: A Re-Study," after LeMasters' and arrived at similar results. A majority of his subjects (53 percent) reported an extensive or severe crisis, 47 percent reported moderate or slight crisis, and none reported no crisis. The sample consisted of 32 college educated, middle-class, urban couples whose first child was under age two. Information was gathered through the use of questionnaires administered seperately to husband and wife. The results, like LeMasters' study, were based on couple crisis scores. Dyer, recognizing as did LeMasters that the family's organization and resources have an influence on the impact of the crisis, found that the state of the marriage and the family organization was average or above for the large majority of the couples up to the advent of their first child. Those couples whose marriage was stronger and who had more resources to draw on tended to experience less crisis. The crisis manifested itself in much the same way as found in the LeMasters' study - i.e., being tied down to the home, financial concerns, adjusting to the new demands of parenthood. Some of the characteristics of couples experiencing less crisis were: (1) those rating their marriage as excellent after the birth of the first child; (2) enrollment in preparation for marriage classes in high school or college; (3) married three years or more before becoming parents; (4) husband a college graduate; (5) planned parenthood; and (6) child was at least six months old at time of study. Dyer, like LeMasters, ascertained that parenthood rather than

marriage marks the final transition to adulthood.

Hobbs conducted two different studies (1965, 1968) to determine the effect of the first child on the family. In both instances he found that, contrary to earlier studies, the arrival of the child did not constitute a crisis experience. Because of the variance in the finding of mothers and fathers on the crisis variable in earlier studies, Hobbs scored the marriage partners independently rather than combining the crisis scores of husband and wife to get crisis scores for couples. The majority of parents indicated that their marriages were more happy and satisfying since the birth of the child. In his first study an objectively scored 23 item checklist was given to a sample of 53 white, urban, first-time parents from all social classes. Education, occupation, and income were quite varied and the mean age of the babies was ten weeks. Hobbs, by means of subanalysis, ruled out the possibility of difference in class background among his subjects as accounting for the discrepency in crisis scores between his study and the previous two. Concerning the 23 item checklist, 75 percent of the fathers and 66 percent of the mothers indicated that a given item did not bother them at all, versus bothered by it somewhat and very much. A majority of fathers, 75 percent and 60 percent respectively, indicated that they were bothered somewhat or very much by the following two items: interruption of routine habits and increased money problems. The categories of somewhat and very much were checked by a majority of mothers for four items: 74 percent were bothered by interruption of routine habits, 68 percent were bothered by tiredness and fatigue, 66 percent were bothered by increased money problems and 60 percent were bothered by feeling edgy or emotionally upset. Only one variable, income, was found to be predictive

of crisis, which suggested that fathers may view their role relationship to the infant as primarily economic.

Concerning the possible reasons for the discrepancies noted in the three different studies, it was felt that the length of time which had elapsed between the baby's birth and data collection may have influenced the findings. LeMasters' subjects recalled as long as five years, Dyers' subjects as much as two years and the parents in Hobbs' study had given birth to their first child within the past four and one-half months. A possibility is that parents can more readily acknowledge negative feelings about their child in retrospect than they can during the time that they are experiencing these feelings (Hobbs, 1965).

Hobbs' second study (1968) bore out the same results - i.e., the addition of the first child may be somewhat stressful, but does not constitute a crisis. Employing both the checklist and the interview method with the same 27 couple sample, Hobbs found that the parents' crisis scores varied with the method of measurement used. Hence, the difference in measuring instruments could account for some of the variations in findings. Beauchamp (1968) in an unpublished Masters thesis, used the two different information gathering techniques (interview and questionnaire) on different subjects and unexpectedly found the two different sets of results quite similar. His data fell between the extremes of LeMasters and Hobbs, each of whose crisis index (interview and questionnaire respectively) was used in this study. It was expected that the oral interview would yield a high degree of crisis as was true in the LeMasters study and that the questionnaire method would reveal a very low percentage of crisis. Beauchamp's sample consisted of 37 married student couples whose

first born child was under six years of age (mean age was 2 years, 4 months). It was found that the birth of the first child causes a need for adjustment in all couples.

As can be seen, the results are quite contradictory in the parenthood as crisis studies. Arthur Jacoby (1969) in a critical review of these studies, gives possible explanations for the discrepancy in published crisis scores. Some of the possibilities are: lack of a standardized method of obtaining and reporting crisis scores, the age of the child at the time of the study, and social class effects.

A little different slant on the subject is provided by William Wainwright, M.D., who has found that fatherhood can precipitate a mental illness, particularly in those individuals with already existing emotional conflicts. Some of the dynamic factors operating together to produce psychopathological reaction to fatherhood are: (1) the child's meaning increased responsibility to the father, financially and otherwise; (2) the birth of a male child may reactivate homosexual conflicts; (3) new child disrupts dependency needs on the part of the father; (4) in becoming a father himself, the individual may become aware of his unacceptable ambivalent feelings toward his own parents and (5) the baby represents a binding force in an unsatisfactory marriage (Wainwright, 1966). Dr. Wainwright points to the need for obstetricians and family doctors to determine what meaning fatherhood may have for the spouses of pregnant patients. These potential fathers could then be given support in becoming established in their new role.

Social Class Differences in Relation to Marriage, Contraception and Parenthood

Regarding courtship and marriage, the economically disadvantaged exhibit a fatalistic attitude; they feel as though they don't have much control over their choice of a mate. In marriage there is emotional isolation of the spouses from each other (Irelan, 1966). Correlates of disadvantaged status are early marriage, early arrival of the first child, and closely spaced children. Havighurst (1962) in his longitudinal study found that disadvantaged girls marry at an early age. Three-fourths of the lower class females in his study were married by the age of 20 and 43 percent were married before reaching the age of 18. There was no clear relationship of social class to age of marriage among the males. Regarding ratings of the marriages in relation to age at marriage, there was a tendency, for both men and women, for higher ratings to be associated with the later ages.

Concerning marital satisfaction, studies have found that persons with low income or education were more apt to be dissatisfied with their marriages than were persons with adequate income and education (Komarovsky, 1964, Renne, 1970).

> "Economic deprivation, anxiety about the future, the sense of defeat, concern about the failure to give one's children a good start in life, the bleak existence - these and other features of poverty are found to affect marriage in a variety of ways. These features tend to produce tensions in the personalities of family members, with inimical consequences for the marital relationship (Komarovsky, 1964, p. 290)."

Social class status alone, however, does not determine or measure the extent of marital satisfaction. Karen Renne (1970) in her study, "Correlates of Dissatisfaction in Marriage," found that people currently

raising children were more likely to be dissatisfied with their marriages than people who had never had children or whose children had left home regardless of race, age, or income level. Feldman, in an extensive study of middle and upper class urban couples found that those with children had a significantly lower level of marital satisfaction than did those without children. His findings were reconfirmed in a follow-up study of 268 husbands and wives. The results were that having a baby caused a decrease in marital satisfaction for both sexes (Silverman and Silverman, 1971).

Concerning desired family size, the lower class Americans, who have the highest birth rate, want as few children as, or fewer than, those of higher socio-economic status. A 1960 Growth of American Families Study showed that non-whites want a significantly smaller average number of children than whites (Jaffe, 1964). Several reasons or explanations exist for the large family size of the lower class. Their sub-culture contains few deterrants to parenthood - i.e., they live in the here and now and are oriented toward immediate gratification. This is reflected in a higher frequency of sexual relations and less use of contraceptives (Winch, 1952). Pohlman (1969) states that it is argued that in the U.S., contraception has been withheld from the poor in a discriminatory fashion. That is, the public medical facilities which lower class people must depend on have not issued contraceptive information or supplies freely because of sensitivity to public opinion. He goes on to say that this situation is changing rapidly. It seems that a more lasting obstacle to effective contraception among the poor is motivational - i.e., it requires some effort on the part of the individual. An important psychological aspect of contraceptive

effectiveness is the disposition to plan and control life and thus to interfere with nature. The reluctance on the part of the lower class to plan, control, or interfere with nature makes birth planning difficult.

Among the lower class, the biological fact of becoming a parent has much meaning.

> "To impregnate and to become pregnant signify to the individual a kind of categorical maturity as adult human beings; the natural consequences of sexual intercourse fixes more permanently and obviously than can the private experience of love-making the status of adulthood, of being grown up. For the working class, which lives much closer to biological experience than does the middle class, the experience of having children assumes heightened importance and around this fact much of their lives revolve (Rainwater, 1960, p. 82)."

Differences can be found between the lower class and middle class in how they view children, parenthood, and the difficulty experienced in the transition to parenthood.

> "At least 40 million fathers, mothers and their children must be considered to be at the lower class level in our society as of the late 1960's. If one assumes that at best rearing children in modern America is the most difficult task that most adults ever have, then it follows that lower class fathers and mothers have an almost impossible task in rearing their children (LeMasters, 1970, p. 71)."

According to LeMasters (1970) lower class parents suffer from the following disadvantages in rearing children: (1) high birth rates; (2) slum neighborhoods; (3) inferior employment; (4) inadequate education; (5) poor health; and (6) unstable marriages. There are also advantages for parents of lower class position. Some of these are: (1) less fear that they will lose status or position in the society; (2) lower class parents are not haunted by the achievement of their ancestors in the way that middle class and upper class parents are; and (3) lower class people

have fewer social obligations and, hence, some have more time with which to rear their children.

Jacoby (1969) suggests that the transition to parenthood may be more difficult for middle class parents than for working class parents. His rationale is the social class variable and the divergent results of LeMasters' and Hobbs' studies. Some of the possible reasons he gives for the transition being more difficult for middle class parents are: (1) middle class standards may be higher; (2) the working class woman places a greater intrinsic valuation on having children; (3) the principal sources of gratification for the working class women are located within the family rather than outside; (4) parenthood is far more likely to interfere with career aspirations for middle class mothers; (5) working class respondents may be less honest in their responses; (6) middle class mothers are less experienced in the care of children; and (7) the middle class husband-wife relationship is more strongly established as affectively positive at the time of birth.

In elaboration of some of the above reasons, other sources with one exception, concur that parenthood is possibly more difficult for the middle class population. The working class wife expects to find her main source of satisfaction in her family and thus to become a mother is to achieve one of the things she wants. Many working class women find the role of mother highly satisfying in and of itself. The middle class woman, on the other hand, expects to be an independent person in her own right and this finds that the presence of young children frustrates her from fulfilling what she considers to be her rightful role (Newson, 1963). Blood and Wolfe conducted a study in which they asked about "bad things" connected with having children. Wives whose husband's income was less

than $3,000 annually did not see children as restricting their freedom, as did the wives whose husbands earned more than $3,000. The low income wives saw motherhood as their only role and they did not expect to have any freedom (Pohlman, 1969).

Gavron (1966), who interviewed a sample of English working class and middle class mothers, found results that indicate that motherhood is more difficult for the working class population. She found ambivalence and self-consciousness on the part of middle class mothers combined with a feeling that it is their right to be something more than just a mother. Among working class mothers, motherhood was expected and accepted as normal, and yet, in some ways, their ability to keep their heads above water as mothers appeared considerably less than that of their middle class counterparts. The factors contributing to this situation include poor housing, lack of play facilities, lack of nursery school and reduced earning capacities. It was also found that although the middle class mother may encounter psychological difficulties concerning her role as an individual with her first baby, she very soon makes a deliberate effort to assert her own rights as an individual. The working class mother who sees motherhood as inevitable is in fact less prepared for the ties of children and is less able to cope with the isolation that follows.

To the working class mother, caring for children represents the central activity of her life. She defines herself mainly as a mother and seeks to find gratification in life principally through this function. The children are considered mainly her property and responsibility and it is through them that she expects to fulfill herself and her potentialities (Rainwater, 1960). The special significance of children and motherhood to the lower

class women may arise from the emotional deprivation in the husband-wife relationship. Children may represent compensation for the husband's lack of attention and for the dullness of life. Also, the limited outside interests of the lower class woman increase the significance of rearing children. Because the father plays a passive role in the home, the dependency of the children on the mother is strengthened (Irelan, 1966).

Higher education affects a woman's attitude toward motherhood, also. The more educated women, found among the middle class versus the lower class, are less likely to view motherhood as the proper role for all women and the more likely they are to see that there are alternatives to motherhood. On the other hand, the less well-educated women turn to child bearing to find fulfillment and self actualization (Silverman and Silverman, 1971). The question arises as to whether the lower class woman has alternative life styles to marriage and motherhood.

> "From the point of view of the individual girl who is failing in school, the most desirable thing is likely to be an early marriage. From society's point of view, it would be better if this type of girl was better prepared for marriage and for adult life, for it seems clear that under present conditions these girls will marry early unless a much more attractive alternative course is open to them, and no such alternative has been offered them by society (Havighurst, 1962, p. 130)."

Preparation and Education for Parenthood

Are today's prospective parents being prepared adequately for parenthood? It would seem that they are not, according to parents themselves and scholars in the field of parenthood. One wife and mother in LeMasters' study expressed it by saying that she and her husband knew where babies came from, but they didn't know what they

were like (LeMasters, 1957). Anna and Arnold Silverman (1971) suggest that some of the fault for the lack of preparation for parenthood lies with the educational systems, in that the subject of parenthood is passed over. The Silvermans advocate that students be given information in the pluses and minuses of parenthood, so that they can make an objective decision as to whether or not they want to become parents.

> "Our schools provide career counseling and college guidance, but nowhere do we have an objective and realistic program that equates parenthood with the words 'Sacrifice,' 'Responsibility,' and 'Dedication' (Silverman and Silverman, 1971, p. 143)."

LeMasters says much the same thing - i.e., young people should have adequate and accurate information regarding parenthood before voluntarily or involuntarily becoming parents.

> "Some of the truths that are not frequently brought out in our romanticized parenthood culture are that rearing children is hard work, it involves tremendous responsibility, it takes all the ability and know how one has and once you have begun you can't quit when you feel like it (LeMasters, 1970, p. 19)."

According to a prominent marriage counselor, physicians also are negligent in not preparing prospective parents for what they can expect when they become parents. Only a few physicians, obstetricians included, discuss with the prospective parents what is happening in the pregnancy and what is going to happen to them, as a couple, when they go home with the "tiny intruder" into their lives together (Fisher, 1968).

One might ask why parents have not been better trained and educated for one of the most important and, potentially, one of the most skilled and rewarding of all jobs. One writer speculates that it has probably been felt that since most everyone is likely to be a parent, everyone would manage to bumble his way through parenthood in his own way, somehow.

And this, it seems, is what has happened. People have bumbled through as their parents did, and as their parents did, and so on (DeRosis, 1970).

Much of the training for parenthood seems to come de facto or with parent education programs. Those programs are concerned with individuals already in the parent role and in that sense are oftentimes curative rather than preventive. There's an abundance of literature dealing with parent education, but a paucity pertaining to preparenthood education - i.e., the preparation and education of individuals for their later role as parents.

The picture in regard to preparenthood education is, however, not all bleak. In 1971 a federal program, Education for Parenthood, was instituted to help teenagers learn about children and how to care for them. The object of the program is to prepare young people for rearing their own families in the years ahead and to encourage them to pursue careers involving work with children. The program, administered by the office of Child Development and the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, is planned to help secondary schools introduce new courses in parenthood education or to modify existing courses. The Education for Parenthood program, by giving teenagers a realistic picture of what it is like to care for children, may enable young people to make more informed choices about both marriage and parenthood (Wolverton, 1973).

Summary

Parenthood has been romanticized in our culture, in part to insure that individuals will continue to reproduce and to sustain parents in their oftentimes difficult job of parenting. However, because of the overpopulation

problem, fewer sanctions are provided individuals today to become parents.

Research studies have shown that most parents find the arrival of a child calls for major adjustments and changes in behavior. The literature is inconclusive as to why the adjustment to parenthood constitutes a crisis for some couples and not for others. Many theories and explanations have been entertained as possible reasons. Knowledge has been advanced in this area over the past 17 years, but much research needs yet to be done to determine if parenthood is truly a crisis.

Lower social class individuals marry at an early age and are more apt to be dissatisfied with their marriage than are individuals with adequate income and education. The lower class also have more children than they desire due to lack of contraceptive measures or ineffective contraception. For the lower class woman, motherhood and her family, particularly her children, are her whole being. "The reward the working class mother seeks for her maternal efforts is reciprocal love while the middle class mother hopes for reflected glory (Rainwater, 1959, p. 102)." A number of studies have indicated that the transition to parenthood is more difficult for the middle class woman than for the lower class woman.

Parents have not been adequately educated or prepared for parenthood. The failure for this lies in many realms -- educational, medical, familial. Preparenthood education is a pressing need and one which is finally receiving some attention.

Appendix 2

VERBAL EXPLANATION OF THE STUDY
(Given each couple at the initial contact)

Hello. I'm Sharon Tooke and as you may have read in the "Fact Sheet" I'm doing a study on parenthood. I'm doing this through Montana State University at Bozeman. I'd be interested in talking with both of you, at a time that is convenient for you, about your feelings surrounding the birth of your first child. I would like to know what you actually experienced as new parents and how it was for you as a couple after the child arrived. Your contributing this kind of information is important and useful because only by knowing the kinds of feelings you had can we understand how individuals such as yourselves view parenthood. Any comments or suggestions you might have may help shed some light on ways to help make parenthood a smoother change-over for others.

If you're interested in participating, I'd be glad to make an appointment to come back so that you can complete the questionnaire. It would take about 20 minutes. Your names would not be used and you would not be identified in any way. Also, I'd be happy to send you a copy of the findings of the study when it's completed in August.

The individuals at this point decide whether they will participate in the study and, if so, a date and time are set. At this time the couple is also asked if they are the biological parents of the eldest child in the family. It is explained that the biological parents of the child are in a position to answer the items on the questionnaire, whereas a step-parent does not have the needed information.

Appendix 3

QUESTIONNAIRE

Below are listed some things which other persons have said bothered them following the birth of their children. Please indicate the extent to which each one has bothered you by a check mark in the appropriate column.

This Bothered Me Following the Birth of Our First Child	Not At All	Some-what	Very Much
1. My marriage partner showing too little attention to baby.			
2. Interference from in-laws.			
3. Worry about wife's personal appearance in general.			
4. Decreased contact with friends.			
5. Interruption of routine habits of sleeping, going places, etc.			
6. My marriage partner showing too much attention to baby.			
7. Additional amount of work.			
8. Disturbed about feelings I have toward baby.			
9. Housekeeping not as neat as it should be.			
10. Decreased sexual interest of self.			

QUESTIONNAIRE (continued)

This Bothered Me Following the Birth of Our First Child	Not At All	Some-what	Very Much
11. Feeling more "distant" from my marriage partner.			
12. Being unable to sleep after going to bed.			
13. Having to change plans we had before baby's birth.			
14. Decreased sexual interest of marriage partner.			
15. Meals being off schedule.			
16. My marriage partner showing too little attention to me and too much to the baby.			
17. Increased money problems.			
18. Reduced feelings of privacy.			
19. Doubting my worth as a parent.			
20. Worry about wife's "loss of figure."			
21. Decreased contact with persons at work, etc.			
22. Physical tiredness or fatigue.			
23. Feeling "edgy" or nervous.			

Question 1 is a two-part question. Please check that which most closely described your marriage before your first child was born and that which described your marriage after the child's birth.

1. Before our first child was born, our marriage was:

_____ Happy; satisfying; most problems that arose were solved.
_____ Not happy or satisfying; problems frequently unsolved; no separations; divorce not considered.
_____ Unhappy; unsatisfying; separations or divorce seriously considered.

Following the birth of our first child and before our other children were born, our marriage was:

_____ More happy and satisfying than before.
_____ About the same as before children's birth.
_____ Less happy and satisfying than before.

2. What things, if any, do you think helped prepare you for parenthood and for knowing what to expect when you had children of your own?

_____ Course in school.
_____ Taking care of younger brothers and sisters.
_____ Taking care of nieces and nephews.
_____ Babysitting
_____ My parents and/or other adults who are parents themselves.
_____ Pre-natal classes.
_____ Physician.
_____ Reading on the subject of children and parents.

3. My age at the time our first child was born:
_____ 14-15
_____ 16-18
_____ 19-21
_____ 22-25
_____ 26 and over

4. How long has you been married before your first child was born?
_____ Under 9 months
_____ 10 months to 2 years
_____ 2 to 3 years
_____ 3 to 4 years
_____ 4 years and over

5. Was the pregnancy planned?

_____ Yes
_____ No

6. What advice, suggestions, ideas, or thoughts, would you have for a married couple who were trying to decide whether or not to have children?

7. Is there anything you would like to say about parenthood and becoming mothers and fathers?

If you would like to receive a copy of the results of this study, please check the appropriate space.

_____ Yes
_____ No

Appendix 4

Item Analysis of Difficulties Experienced Differently by Mountain-Plains Men versus Women

Item	Sex	Response (1) N	(1) %	(2) N	(2) %	(3) N	(3) %	x^2	Contingency Coefficient
(1)	Male	45	90	3	6	2	4	6.51*	.25
	Female	37	74	12	24	1	2		
(2)	Male	24	48	20	40	6	12	.63	.08
	Female	23	46	23	46	4	8		
(3)	Male	36	72	11	22	3	6	13.08*	.34
	Female	18	36	26	52	6	12		
(4)	Male	31	62	16	32	3	6	.23	.05
	Female	31	62	17	34	2	4		
(5)	Male	18	36	29	58	3	6	1.16	.11
	Female	18	36	26	52	6	12		
(6)	Male	41	82	6	12	3	6	4.41	.21
	Female	47	94	3	6	0	0		
(7)	Male	20	40	28	56	2	4	3.79	.19
	Female	26	52	19	38	5	10		
(8)	Male	44	88	5	10	1	2	1.34	.12
	Female	43	86	7	14	0	0		
(9)	Male	32	64	16	32	2	4	9.41*	.29
	Female	17	34	27	54	6	12		
(10)	Male	45	90	5	10	0	0	7.79*	.27
	Female	34	68	14	28	2	4		
(11)	Male	45	90	4	8	1	2	7.56*	.27
	Female	36	72	14	28	0	0		
(12)	Male	39	78	10	20	1	2	2.88	.17
	Female	35	70	10	20	5	10		
(13)	Male	34	68	15	30	1	2	1.09	.10
	Female	36	72	14	28	0	0		

* Significant $p \leq .05$

Item	Sex	Response						x^2	Contingency Coefficient
		(1)		(2)		(3)			
		N	%	N	%	N	%		
(14)	Male	40	80	10	20	0	0	.07	.03
	Female	42	84	8	16	0	0		
(15)	Male	41	82	9	18	0	0	5.85	.24
	Female	31	62	17	34	2	4		
(16)	Male	46	92	4	8	0	0	.14	.04
	Female	46	92	4	8	0	0		
(17)	Male	10	20	35	70	5	10	4.93	.22
	Female	11	22	26	52	13	26		
(18)	Male	38	76	12	24	0	0	1.92	.14
	Female	33	66	16	32	1	2		
(19)	Male	41	82	9	18	0	0	8.62*	.28
	Female	28	56	20	40	2	4		
(20)	Male	36	72	12	24	2	4	8.05*	.27
	Female	23	46	19	38	8	16		
(21)	Male	44	88	6	12	0	0	1.01	.10
	Female	43	86	6	12	1	2		
(22)	Male	35	70	15	30	0	0	25.19*	.45
	Female	12	24	28	56	10	20		
(23)	Male	24	48	23	46	3	6	5.46	.23
	Female	13	26	31	62	6	12		

*Significant $p \leq .05$

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